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AUTHOR Harding-Esch, Edith
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ABSTRACT

Practical applications of the concepts of the Modern Language Project for teaching languages for special purposes at the university level are described. The Modern Languages Project, sponsored by the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe, involves the formulation of a coherent European policy on adult language learning which would provide a framework for a learner-centered, motivation-based language learning system designed to meet diverse social and vocational needs. The practical suggestions were generated by a panel of experts that met to examine the results of language courses at eight universities in seven countries. Such topics as the role of the project in the teaching of languages for special purposes, application of project principles to vocational training, classifying and organizing course content, teacher training, needs analysis of specific target groups before and during language instruction, and the formulation of learning objectives were discussed in response to questions raised by panel members. It is concluded that methods that make students responsible for their own learning and promote self-management of study are the best approaches for meeting individual learning needs. Case studies and participants are listed. (RW)

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

MODERN LANGUAGES PROJECT

Language learning for special purposes:
methodological proposals

Working paper

by Mrs Edith Harding-Esch
Department of Linguistics,
Cambridge University

based on the work of a group of experts
set up by the Association of Partly or Wholly
French-Language Universities (AUPELF),
in co-operation with the Council for Cultural Co-operation

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TRAINING COURSE PROPOSALS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is meant to have a firm practical bias; its object is to offer suggestions and advice to people in higher education who design syllabuses for courses in languages for special purposes, develop and/or co-ordinate courses of this kind, train teachers for such courses and conduct research in language teaching.

The expression "language for special purposes" is not very satisfactory (see questions 1 and 4). It is in such common use, however, that it seems reasonable to employ it here in its broadest sense, namely, the material communicated in teaching foreign languages to "non-specialist" target groups (ie non-linguists), for future - or present - professional purposes, or in preparing students for further study in their own country or in the country in which the language they are learning is spoken.

As the object of this booklet is to show how the ideas of the Modern Languages Project of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) of the Council of Europe (see Appendix 1) could be applied in practice at university level in teaching languages for special purposes, the Association of Partly or Wholly French-Language Universities (AUPELF), acting in co-operation with the Council of Europe, sought the material from eight university institutions in seven countries (Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and United Kingdom) which are already running courses of this type. The CREDIF also took part in the discussions of the group (see Appendix 3 for list of participants) representing those institutions; and the following text represents an effort to bring together the results of the individual experiments.

It should be noted that although almost all the courses concerned are courses in French (see Appendix 2) - which accounts for the frequency of reference to Un Niveau-Seuil - the application of the methodological proposals set out below is certainly not confined to that language; they are valid for all target languages.

Working back from what is being done in the field has both advantages and disadvantages. The main disadvantage, as can readily be imagined, is the great variety among those experiments, resulting from local conditions, the aims of the institutions, the nature of the target groups and the sometimes divergent interpretations of the central concepts of the CDCC project.

The impression given by individual reports is indeed one of particles shooting off in all directions. Yet for all the local differences and incipient pluralisms, there are visible signs everywhere of attachment to a number of common principles and similar trends can be seen in the way the teams' methods and thinking have evolved.

It is hoped that this pooling of effort will help in the setting up of a network of pilot experiments based on the same principles but expressed in different forms, introducing innovations in method, techniques and teacher training.

The contents are set out as follows:

Part 1 contains the answers to the questions which the representatives asked (and are still asking) about the relationship between the CDCC's Modern Languages Project and their own activity. Part 2 describes the way needs analysis is perceived and practised.

Part 3 describes the determination of learning objectives and their selection in specific situations.

The conclusions refer to methodological problems and make recommendations in terms of the questions raised by the people taking part in the discussions, especially those for which the CDCC project would seem not to offer a reply or even any basis for a reply.

It should be added that the institutions involved have no desire to set themselves up as "models"; they merely undertook to share the problems they are trying to solve and their responses to one or two of them. They did so in all humility, and in the hope that co-operation and exchange might help them to eliminate some of the many inconsistencies between word and deed which readers will not fail to notice. A summary of the courses analysed (see Appendix 2) may be found of assistance; also, a few items of recommended reading have been included at the end of each section (see also Appendix 3), almost all of which are readily available.

PART 1: GENERAL PROBLEMS

Question 1: In what way is the CDCC's Modern Languages Project relevant to the teaching of languages for special purposes?

The object of the CDCC's work is the acquisition of communicative competence, and that is also the objective of the courses analysed. At Cambridge, production engineering students are being taught to make and maintain contacts with German firms; at Eindhoven, engineering students are learning how to communicate orally with French-language colleagues; in Lisbon the object is to enable students to avail themselves of training facilities or courses in France or of offers of contacts with French firms, while in Lyons it is to enable graduate engineers from other countries to follow specialist courses in France, and in Tilburg it is to enable economics students to consult specialist literature in French.

Three principles are proposed as a basis for determining the learning objectives of a course, which should be (Van Ek 78):

1. need-oriented
2. learner-centred
3. functional (meaning, here, that the objective, once achieved should enable the student to perform communicative functions in an appropriate manner).

At this level of generalisation everyone is agreed, but no one underestimates the difficulty of the tasks - because at this point the notion of "language for special purposes" also proves inadequate. "Medical French" or "scientific French" refer to a widely accepted concept of "register", according to which a register is defined by its formal linguistic properties (Halliday et al 1964: 89, Ulijn 1979: 126-127), and in this sense it is a highly useful instrument of analysis for linguistic description at the textual level.

To find the characteristics of a given register, large quantities of material are analysed and quantitative data extracted regarding vocabulary, collocations and grammatical structures. Teaching materials derived from these analyses will meet some of students' requirements by enabling them to acquire a linguistic competence, but it will be up to the students themselves to discover the rules for using the language in real situations, ie the communicative competence - for example, what characterises communication between engineers or between doctor and patient?

All the teaching teams represented in the working group are trying to apply these three principles; where the expression "language for special purposes" does occur (Lisbon 1, Romania), close reading shows that this is only a handy reference. Courses are usually referred to in terms of the target group, which is a clear indication of the importance attached to the aspect of "meeting the needs of a category of learners" and the refusal to be committed to some standard linguistic content to be transmitted.

Question 2: In the framework defined above, what decisions are essential because they affect the definition of objectives?

To determine the learning objectives of a course in terms of learners' communicative needs, it is necessary first to analyse those needs. The decisive choices are made at the level of the needs analysis procedure.

These choices depend upon the level, and the time, at which the analysis is made, ie whether it takes place before or at the same time as the course. For the course for students of veterinary medicine, for example (Cambridge 2), it was possible to interview an entire group of students who had attended a course abroad without previous language training. At Eindhoven a very full survey was carried out among a sample of students and firms and 10,000 job offers were analysed.

At Lyons, on the other hand, the analysis is revised for each group of learners.

Analysis procedures are also conditioned by the cohesiveness of the target group and its level of professional training. The introductory year of distance studies, for example (Lisbon 1), necessarily involves a very broad and shifting audience, whereas the Lyons group are experienced professionals.

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Lastly, needs analysis procedures are determined by the aims of the institution and its perception of its role. In the Eindhoven/Tilburg project the goal was to devise a course which could be used by the technical and commercial sector as a whole, hence the need for analysis of sales and exports to the Netherlands and of technical and scientific co-operation contacts with developing countries.

The procedures selected will have a direct influence on the definition of objectives; these problems will be considered in detail in Part 2.

The other vital decisions (all flowing from choices made at the level of needs) which must be taken explicitly are these:

1. To what degree of detail must the target group be characterised, and the communicative and linguistic repertory which is to be mastered? This also must be specified.

In the case of a preparatory year intended to "open" occupational doors, for example, the repertory will perforce be very broad.

2. Is stress to be laid on oral or on written communication? In the course for veterinary students, for instance, the only communicative acts performed in writing relate to the comprehension of clinical analysis charts in regular use by practitioners. These are requests for information and students must reply by placing crosses in the correct box (order 2 non-verbal acts).
3. Is attention to be concentrated on one field of language activity, eg occupational relationships? This is the aim of the Eindhoven/Tilburg technical-commercial project.
4. Are speech acts to be chosen on the basis of commonsense and experience - with the help of Un Niveau Seuil - or will an informal or even a full-scale research project be needed? The Eindhoven/Tilburg project directors, for example, are planning to make a study, based on tape-recordings, of the way in which sales are negotiated. To study the communication problems of engineering students undergoing training abroad (Cambridge 1), the teaching team intends to record trainees' initial contacts upon arrival in a factory.
5. Is it desirable to restrict fields of reference and if so, how and on what basis?

For example, the veterinary students (Cambridge 2) are beginners and are given a very brief introduction before leaving for their course. The course directors thought it would be more useful to them to know how to communicate their lack of understanding and to ask about the language, rather than to increase their vocabulary of diseases. This decision was based on the fact that these students already have considerable professional proficiency - that is, they can identify a disease from its symptoms - and also on the consideration that in many cases the only use of knowing the scientific name of a disease is in exchanges with other veterinary surgeons. Their clients, after all (farmers etc), almost always use vernacular terms which the student will have to learn in any case.

6. How is the course to be organised, that is, what form is the syllabus to take? This is the last but by no means least of the decisions. Where learners will be using what they learn on the spot, as at Lyons, the criteria will be: first things first; what is immediately necessary, followed by what would be desirable. When students are being taught abroad in preparation for contact, a choice can be made between a linear or a spiral progression, in which the same situations are used again at different levels of interactive complexity (see question 7 below). It is also at this point that the importance of practice in linguistic forms (ie the amount of time devoted to it) will be determined, if (as is the case at Tilburg) it has been decided to teach grammar explicitly, alongside the "functional" aspects.

Recommended reading

- Coste, D et al: Un Niveau-Seuil, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1976.
Introduction;
- Pelfrène, A: "Analyse des besoins langagiers préables à une formation", Langue Française, 30, 1977
- Porcher, L: "Une notion ambiguë: Les besoins langagiers", Les cahiers du CRELEF, 3, 1977
- Richterich, R, Chancerel, J L: Identifying the needs of adults learning a foreign language, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1977. (Also published by Pergamon Press)

Question 3: Can Un Niveau-Seuil be used?

Un Niveau-Seuil was designed for 5 broad groups of learners, 2 of which are likely to have special-purpose language needs. One is specialists and professionals not leaving their own country and the other is older teenagers or young adults in schools or at university in their country of origin. None of the courses discussed applies to the first group, and this is probably not an accident. The needs of these people are substantial but highly individual and it is very rare for them to be found assembled in groups which would justify designing a course for them. On the other hand, the target groups of Lisbon 1 and 3, Eindhoven/Tilburg, Cambridge 1 (at first), Cambridge 2 and Bucharest include people in the second category and have problems resulting from the fact, as pointed out in Un Niveau-Seuil, that their requirements in the field of vocational inter-relations are constantly changing, and although an instrumental intention and orientation are likely to emerge quite distinctly, the range of possibilities available or imagined remains very vast.

The designers of the courses covered here mainly used the "Speech Acts" section of Un Niveau Seuil as a source of reference when drawing up and assessing course objectives. In revising a previous choice, this section is a very efficient and speedy means of measuring the effects of the decision.

For example, the content of "requesting information about the language" units and variations on these could easily be determined. Part IV of the section, on discourse operations, provides opportunities for introducing such forms as "Can you give more detail/explain/ etc?", which are important because repetition of discourse operations is a way of reintroducing the same information in a different form.

The usefulness of Un Niveau-Seuil in the analysis of authentic documents has been shown very clearly by E Roulet in "Un Niveau-Seuil: Presentation and guide to use", Strasbourg 1977, to which readers are referred.

On the other hand, it will be noted that remarkably little reference is made to the grammar section (page 225 et seq of Un Niveau-Seuil); everybody finds it admirable and great hopes are held out for it, but it has plainly not been used in its present form. Whenever grammar was mentioned what was meant was "the other" (ie "real") grammar.

The greatest pitfall to be avoided in regard to Un Niveau-Seuil lies in supposing that the content of a French course for students working in specialist occupations would be beyond Un Niveau-Seuil. If people are always thinking in terms of "language for special purposes", they are likely to assume that Un Niveau-Seuil can be of no use to them because it does not contain, say, a "technical vocabulary" or a "political economics" vocabulary; in fact, however, when specialists are communicating with one another at the level of their professional relationships they most often express themselves in non-technical language. This is particularly true of fact-to-face oral communication. When reference objects are to hand, as in workshop, there is no need to mention them by name and shared knowledge is necessarily taken for granted.

Take the following example:

- Hi. Got it working yet?
- No - nothing doing, it won't start.
- You tried the other one?
- Er, no. It's a nuisance. There's something jammed somewhere. It won't budge.
- We can't go on like that. I'll get Paul.

Here two engineers are talking about a machine tool which has broken down. It is obvious that the problems have nothing to do with technical vocabulary but rather with the lack of any vocabulary. We can understand all the words, all the utterances, and can say that these are questions followed by answers leading to a statement of a decision taken, yet still not know what is going on. Indeed, "What is going on?" would be the appropriate question from a third person wanting to understand the situation.

Even in the more restrictive context of written discourse the difficulties encountered by a foreigner are not always those one might expect. For instance, the covering letter which the Lyons team sent to AUPELF on

20 April 1980 along with their very substantial report ended informally with a cultural reference: "Hoping that we have contributed to solving the mystery of the Schmilblick /Schmilblick = mystery object in a radio guessing game/ and firmly resolved to press on, Best regards (signed) ...".

The aim of the great majority of the courses is to prepare learners to behave appropriately in oral communication situations (at once or after a longer or shorter period of time) and for this the communicative content of Un Niveau-Seuil seems quite sufficient.

The examples given above show, however, that care must be taken not to think of teaching material in terms of a series of speech acts. What makes it possible to interpret the meaning of a conversation or letter are the rules of oral or written discourse organisation which ensure its coherence. Question 4 deals with this in more detail.

Recommended reading

Moirand, S, "L'enseignement de la langue comme instrument de communication. Etat de la question", Actes du 12e colloque annuel de l'Association canadienne de linguistique appliquée, Montreal, ACLA/CIRB 1981

Roulet, E, "Un Niveau-Seuil. Presentation et guide d'emploi" Strasbourg, Council of Europe 1977

Ulijn, J M with A Ph Wijkamp, "Daniel Coste over 'Un Niveau-Seuil' in een interview met enkele Nederlandse docenten Frans", Levende Talen, 332, 241-252 (also available in English).

Question 4: Are there areas of language use and types of communication exclusive to specialists in a field?

Thus far emphasis has been laid on the fact that it was pedagogically more useful, in defining learning objectives, to concentrate on the analysis of the language needs of particular individuals or groups rather than on that of a particular language. Now why should there be such insistence on this, when numerous studies have clearly established the formal characteristics of the languages used by particular groups of specialists (cf Ulijn, J M, 1979 b)?

The first question to consider is the nature of what is to be learned. When a person expressed himself - in writing, let us say, an expository scientific article - the text produced is not just a sequence of grammatical propositions each having an illocutory value independently of all the others. The propositions and acts form a discourse. Given X propositions, there will be numerous linguistic resources available (syntactic operations, resources of the language to cohesiveness between propositions) for deriving Y texts from them, all of which will be acceptable. But the one which is ultimately preferred is the one that is most suitable for the readers to whom it is addressed. The degree of correspondence will be measured in terms of the knowledge of the conventions governing communication between scientists, a knowledge acquired by those participating in this form of

written communication in the course of their experience. So what matters most in teaching a specialisation is these conventions and discorsal modes between specialists, rather than the rules governing the arrangement of language in the text.

It will be observed that the foregoing is valid for both written and oral discourse and there is no reason, in theory, why the use of discourse analysis should be restricted to the teaching of written language, although - in France at least - that is the general tendency (Coste 80).

Our replies to the objections prompted by this position are very incomplete. The language teachers' first question is whether it is possible to produce and interpret the discorsal level without having previously learned morpho-syntax and basic vocabulary.

The problem is a very real one, but badly stated. It is perfectly true that musical notes must be learned before the rules of harmony and composition, but it is no less true that what makes us say, even as beginners, that a chord sounds "wrong" or "unexpected" is our implicit knowledge of those rules. Similarly, we must not assume that formal accuracy and specialist grammar or vocabulary must necessarily come before discourse. We have all met the problem of the students who can make a correct analysis of a paragraph or passage in an article but remain perfectly incapable of interpreting it because they are not familiar with the conventions of the discorsal universe with which they are dealing. Learning should rather be a parallel process, thus - one side helping the other - and not a sequence progressing from the supposedly simple (text) to the supposedly complex (discourse).

The second objection contends that this approach is needlessly complicated. The conventions of discourse in the field of specialisation are already known in the mother tongue and can be transferred from it; all that is needed is to learn the language.

To be sure, some discorsal domains exist - such as written scientific discourse - which might seem to imply the further existence of a universal rhetoric accepted by the whole international scientific community (Widdowson 77). Recent studies show, however, that this hypothesis is by no means borne out in all cases. A thesis on written medical discourse in English and French (Régent 80), for instance, shows that the rules for setting out information and organising discourse are in fact far from the same. In this respect there is a whole area of research to be explored, one of great importance for language teaching.

Lastly, many teachers ask the highly practical question of how they are to find the time to teach the language if they must also teach a whole system of socio-cultural conventions?

No one would challenge the fact that teaching the language remains one of the major objectives for teachers; besides, we know precious little about discorsal phenomena. We must not forget, however, that what counts in the final analysis is that students should be able to communicate and that in order to do this they must be at least made aware of phenomena touching

upon the discorsal level, for they may otherwise be acquiring an instrument they cannot use. In this connection it will be noted that it is perfectly possible to design a course which takes the discorsal aspect into account, even for beginners (Widdowson 78 and 79). Setting up a dichotomy between linguistic phenomena and discorsal phenomena is pointless if we agree that in any event language is necessarily learned in a given discorsal context - ordinarily that of professor-student discourse in the classroom. To avoid this false dichotomy, therefore, what must be worked on are the communicative situations in which language is used in the class.

The point can also be made that all of us are constantly experiencing new discorsal conventions in our mother tongues. It happens every time we are involved in a new communicative situation (at a meeting of a cultural or sports club committee or a seminar) and we feel "at sea" because even though we understand everything that is being said (the text) we do not understand what is actually going on within the group (we are unable to interpret the speech acts at the illocutory level because we are not familiar with the conventions of this particular discourse).

Analysing this kind of experience in our own languages and defining what we must learn in order to become effective participants in the communicative situation might be an excellent exercise for us.

We can say, then, that there are many fields of language use and types of communication which are exclusive to the specialists in certain fields. But in both written and oral discourse, what raises a "special" problem for the learner who wants to take an active part in communication, whether in expressing or interpreting, are the socio-cultural material and conventions conveyed at the discorsal level, far more than the linguistic material and its propositions at the textual level. Language learning remains an important factor, but it is one common to every learner of a foreign language; what we are concerned with here is the use of that language in specific discorsal worlds.

Recommended reading

- Beacco, J C, Darot, M. Analyses de discours et lectures de textes de spécialité, Paris, BELC, Multigr. 1977.
- Coste, D "Analyse de discours et pragmatique de la parole dans quelques usages d'une didactique des langues", Applied Linguistics, Vol. 2, no. 3, 1980 b.
- Greimas, A J, Sémiotique et sciences sociales, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1976.
- Latour, D, Fabbri, P "La rhétorique de la science", Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, 13, 1977.
- Régent, O, "Le discours médical écrit en français et en anglais: Etude comparative en vue d'applications pédagogiques". Doctoral dissertation, University of Nancy 2. UER in applied linguistics. CRAPEL 1980. Unpublished; write to the author, c/o Université de Nancy 2, B.P. 33.97 - F 54015 - Nancy Cedex

Ulijn, J, "L'apprentissage de la lecture du français scientifique et la langue maternelle", Working Papers in Bilingualism 1979, 19, 89-114.

Widdowson, H, "The description of scientific language", in Explorations in Applied Linguistics, OUP 1979, first published in a French version in Le Français dans le monde, No. 129, May/June 1977

Question 5: In proposing a common approach, does the CDCC project not disregard the problems arising out of national particularities?

By nature, the material in the CDCC publications is "neutral", but one need only compare The Threshold Level, Un Niveau-Seuil and Kontaktschwelle to perceive that the neutrality is not real, and the problem arises in a very different way for those working in the field. Learning to communicate in French is not at all the same thing for people in the Netherlands, in England or in France; and one of the objects of the Eindhoven/Tilburg project is to take just these national differences into account.

1. Learners' identity

Relative importance of languages:

Communicative needs in French vary considerably from one country to another, depending on the professional category. In Great Britain, for example, German is the first language needed by engineering students, whilst in the Netherlands and Denmark French is taught less than English and German. But in the two last-named countries commercial relations are more intensive with German- and French-speaking countries than with English-speaking ones. The practical problem is therefore to convince institutions training engineers in technical and commercial fields that including French in the curriculum does indeed correspond to a reality in the present commercial context, and the only way to do so is by giving them serious facts and figures.

2. Learners' expectations, motivations and attitudes

a. Previous background

In Great Britain, French is still being taught in secondary schools as a "language of culture", out of tradition. This has implications for the level of linguistic competence of students in higher education; it is extremely rare to find absolute beginners in French at the university. It also means that the students have preconceived ideas about what is entailed in learning French, and unfortunately the marks left by their secondary school experience are very often negative, because the aim there was to pass examinations and the chief activity was translation. Hence there are certain learning habits and strategies which must be taken into account. The "contact day" of the Cambridge 1 and 2 projects is partly designed to structure students' expectations by means of individual interview and communication exercises.

b. Other people's linguistic knowledge

The engineering students at Cambridge are well aware for example, that French engineers are very likely to be able to cope in English. The idea of the English as a people who are incapable of learning foreign languages is still alive and well.

On the other hand, a Dutch student knows that French people do not speak Dutch. There is always the possibility of using English, but in the commercial field there are some situations in which this would create a bad impression and be considered discourteous.

These two groups will therefore have a completely different approach to learning French. To get over this problem at Cambridge, it was felt that the best method would be to include in the course a task which students would feel was significant in their training as engineers but the communicative demands of which would make it impossible for them to count on the French person's knowledge of English, ie an industrial course abroad, replacing the group trip which is extremely reassuring in linguistic terms and confirms the students' belief that they would have no problems if they went to France and that all French people speak English. We shall come back to the way in which this change can be negotiated. Care must nevertheless be taken not to act as if no-one in France spoke English, as it is useful to fall back on when one has difficulties in expressing oneself.

c. Status and prestige of different socio-occupational categories

These vary considerably from one country to another. Becoming an engineer or a doctor means becoming the product of a type of training undergone in very particular institutions in order to fulfil certain individual or family aspirations, and the new recruit knows in what way or in what type of organisation his professional ability will be exercised.

The contrasts here are so great from one country to another that some professional groups do not communicate at all. Outside the area of "pure" research, for example, English and French doctors and pharmacists apparently have nothing to say to each other.

In France, every family hopes that its children will become "engineers" with the implication that they will go to a "Grande Ecole"; in England, the word "engineer" certainly does not have the same connotations. Getting into Cambridge carries much more prestige than being enrolled in the department of engineering. These problems of status and prestige (and I admit that this is all rather vague) are of practical importance since they influence the self-images of both the schools and their students. When students are faced with the fact that they are seen in a different light in other countries, they are not always able to assimilate the resulting cultural shock. When students are being prepared for further training or an in-service training course in a French-speaking country, this has to be borne in mind. One technique which seems appropriate for making students aware of this (Cambridge 2) is to have them work with French-speaking students on a "foreign course" in their own country and discuss the problems they encounter. The French-speaking students are asked to list the "surprises" they met in day-to-day life, work and relationships with staff and students, describe events which they have experienced. These are then

by the group until they succeed in explaining why a particular event surprised them, ie putting their finger on their preconception. It is an amusing technique, extremely useful for both the French- and English-speaking students and it enables them to understand each other's point of view.

d. The bearing of specific institutional contexts on needs:
integration into a French training institution

These problems are of vital importance if students leave to undertake training in France (Lyons 1, 2, 3, Cambridge 1 and 2, Lisbon 2). The choices made by the institutions training, say, engineers vary from one country to the next. This means that what happens in the institutions varies, work is organised differently and the course content also differs, as does the implicit model of the abilities and behaviour of the "good engineer" or the "good trainee". In Lyons, for example, one entire part of the curriculum is an "updating" in theory considered necessary before students start work. Since these are all qualified engineers, there is a risk that the characteristically French quality of this theoretical instruction will be interpreted by some students as a sign that the institution has a pretty low opinion of their previous degree. If learners are required to work in an effective way with teams of French people or to fit into a group of French students, they must be able to make a rapid judgment of the communicative network in which they find themselves in order to behave appropriately. It seems that the best way of preparing them for this is to have them listen to recordings of actual clients in the institution they are to attend. The Cambridge 2 project experimentally asked the previous year's students to bring back such recordings for the following year's class, but the quality was too poor for them to be used. It was possible to find out in detail how a team of veterinary surgeons in a clinical school, made up of professors and researchers, behaved on their daily "rounds" - who used the familiar or polite form of address to whom etc -, but characterising a few specimen situations is far from sufficient. Perhaps, until research is forthcoming, the best course is to teach the student how to ask the questions himself, about working methods pecking orders etc, when he arrives.

Lastly, there is the pedagogical discourse of the institution, when foreign students are mixed with French ones in scientific and technical courses, and this must also be borne in mind. In reality, the language used by staff in teaching often places French students at an advantage and foreign students at a disadvantage. In teaching new material, they take into account knowledge shared with the French students, and to make concepts easier for these students to grasp they illustrate information or place it in context by referring to a world which foreigners do not know. A discovery will be placed in its historical context in relation to the

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history of France, great men will be quoted or cultural references employed, as in the example quoted by Hutchinson and Waters (1980): "... about the distance between the wickets on a cricket pitch". These discursual phenomena all compound the difficulty foreign students must face, since the linguistic and cultural aspects prevent them from acquiring the scientific content instead of making it easier for them to do so. In this respect it should be noted that at Lyons one of the aims of the "catching-up" process mentioned above is to make the language subsequently used by the teaching staff more accessible; further, these particular classes are specially designed for them.

Recommended reading

Hutchinson, T and Waters, A, "Performance and competence in English for Special Purposes", Applied Linguistics, vol. 11. No. 1 (81), 56-57

Question 6: How can the principles of the modern languages project be applied in vocational training and yet not conflict with institutional imperatives?

Nature of the problem

In teaching a language to students in professional training, the principles of the CDCC's Modern Languages Project are particularly difficult to apply in the field since they touch upon a sensitive point: the absolute control over the training of professionals by the university institution imparting it, and the point is made all the more sensitive by the fact that the universities are often on uneasy terms with the professional organisations themselves. In simple terms engineering schools and departments do not need language teachers to tell them how to train engineers. A language teacher is there to teach languages. But suppose someone comes along to the institution and says "I am prepared to teach French to your students - here -, but you must tell me what communicative situations to prepare them for, otherwise I cannot offer a coherent syllabus capable of motivating them". If the matter has been given no previous thought, if French has been included in the curriculum for reasons which have nothing to do with the real requirements of the profession (ministry circular, a gap in the timetable, a sop to students who raised a petition the previous year, prestige of the school, etc), all that can be offered is a course in "general" French aimed mainly at a communicative competence for travellers. As for the "specialist" area, that is, the communicative competence which must be acquired in order to act appropriately in the model situations experienced by members of a profession, it is not dealt with because there is no communication at all. At most, an ad hoc "professional" element can be introduced, based on imaginary probable situations. But in order to make this area a significant part of

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training, the institution must be willing to co-operate with French training institutions in one way or another, either by running courses or by organising exchanges. Such co-operation is not easy to achieve. For example, if we set out to run courses abroad, the training we have already given will be judged by the French (see the example of Lyons 1). Then too, the organisational problems are considerable. Who is to direct the course? Can we trust a French engineer? Will he understand the course in the same way as we do? Perhaps he will need to be invited for briefing: Who is to pay? And finally (!), what language are we to use? If the person, let us say, who is responsible for the course on the English side comes to visit his trainees in France, is his ghastly French not going to make him look pathetic? The list is long and non-exhaustive, and is simply meant to show the deep-rooted tenacity of resistance to change which must be expected.

Negotiation procedures

What can be done? The key to these problems lies in the ability to negotiate.

The desired result is to introduce a course aimed at a communicative competence in the professional field, and hence it raises the problem of how trainers see communication with the corresponding professional groups.

If any change is to take place, all the members of the group to which you belong must develop a common language in the course of a number of interactions. The members of this group are: the teachers/researchers/professionals responsible for the academic and vocational training of students, the students, and yourself as language teacher, more or less integrated into the team (a good test of your integration is your participation, or otherwise, at staff meetings, class councils, evaluation sessions etc). Your progress can be assessed as you go along, depending on the way the members, as a group (or groups), interpret and discuss your projects, proposals, letters and speech during the meetings and discussions at which decisions will be taken on your course, its aims and its organisation; and, as individuals, look at the whole thing, ask themselves questions, talk about it with friends etc. Naturally, you will take into account the contribution of people you talk to: for example, most teachers/researchers/professionals, as individuals, have contacts with French-speaking countries and friends living in them. Individually, they communicate with French-speaking partners, but not enough to imagine that their contacts reveal communication needs in the professional field which should change their view of the objectives of language learning by students.

The students, for their part, are highly motivated by the idea of improving their career openings (these are young people and there are many problems of employment), not to mention their desire to know the outside world.

Your essential role will be to facilitate communication between members of the group, by acting and participating in it. This means:

- making proposals: if a course already exists, by assessing it, using Un Niveau-Seuil for example, and circulating a plan for a new course with the same general aims, but:

- A:
1. referring to existing enquiries and surveys of the needs of the professional group concerned (proof that you yourself are not an amateur),
 2. referring to what is done in comparable, rival establishments (reference groups)
 3. referring to ideas favoured by some of the staff - for this you will have had informal discussions with them beforehand -,
 4. referring to the needs expressed by students, to whom you will have spoken beforehand.

Items 3 and 4 will enable the people involved to interpret your project.

- B: Proposing alternative courses all of which are feasible but some more difficult to carry out than others. For example a "conventional" form with weekly classes, an intensive session, which presents problems for everyone. It is important that you show your awareness of the problems of others.
- C: Expressed succinctly, and in simple terms, using absolutely no jargon. If there is no course already in existence and you are asked to give an opinion or to organise training make the most of your position of strength. Insist on changing everything you consider unacceptable. You can afford to be more aggressive since if a course had just been set up this means that the decision has been taken for reasons which seemed valid and which you must be informed of.

- Obtain outside assistance:
- nominal: by becoming a "pilot project" of the Council of Europe;
- financial: grants from relevant government bodies, professional organisations or private foundations;
- educational: Alliance Française, embassy cultural department, etc.

The aim is to show that in your professional field you are co-operating with French-speaking countries and that it works, but also to increase your influence, particularly over administrators.

- Consult people individually:

It is by contacts of this kind that you can make bolder suggestions in order both to test the ground and to gain a better understanding of the problems raised by your suggestions. On the one hand, the nature of the

problems people present differs because they have different responsibilities, but also because they have different educations and experiences; in general, people in close touch with the profession will be more encouraging than teachers of academic subjects. Finally, they have different qualities: some are excellent negotiators at faculty meetings, while others have a tendency to rush ahead regardless.

- Encourage contact between staff and students:

In particular, encourage teachers of the specialisation to take part in the language courses themselves.

- Act carefully and at the right time:

In particular, make the most of the favourable mood prevailing at the time of evaluation (a new course is always a success). The end of a good report is the best place for new proposals.

Make use of every indication that the members of the institution are not exploiting the professional possibilities for communication with French-speaking countries.

- . Have students on holiday in French-speaking countries made contact with factories? Have their summer jobs been relevant to their training? What possibilities for grants are being missed?
- . How are offers or applications from French-language countries received?
- . Are there any French-language researchers or teachers in the institution?
- . What is their role, and what is the feeling about them?

Have inquiries made about training possibilities and contacts in French-language countries (this is not your responsibility in the group).

These few indications on negotiation procedures with an institution show that progress will be made as and when individuals feel the need to take action.

It will be noted in the above that we have given an example of a "communicative" method as being appropriate for a language course. This is not surprising, since the aim of negotiation is to develop a common language on which action can be based.

Substitute the word "teacher" for "you" and the word "learner" for "teacher/researcher/professional/people responsible for training/students", and all the characteristic elements of such a course will emerge in particular the role and actions of the "teacher".

Question 7: The organisation of communicative objectives raises considerable problems for language teaching in the professional field. What is the most effective way of classifying and organising content?

It is not possible to give directives for the organisation of a syllabus, because everything depends on the local situation and the particular needs

We should nevertheless note here that, for teaching aimed at a communicative competence, we must completely change our habitual ways of thinking and working in terms of syllabus content, "progression" and the sub-divisions of lessons.

a. We have grown accustomed to thinking of syllabus content as being a pre-established list of linguistic forms speech acts, or notions. It must be acknowledged that the presentation of Un Niveau-Seuil does not help us here. In a classroom with a teacher and pupils, however, it is the situational context of the class which determines communication and it is what people do, ie their activities, which determines communication the communication content of exchanges and the linguistic content of utterances. What matters then is the method, ie procedures for taking action, since this is what determines what is said and what is learnt. This means that it is more useful to think of means than ends, of the learning process rather than its product. Example (Cambridge 2): Using the data from a clinical analysis sheet, the students work in pairs, each with a French student of veterinary medicine. The task is to write a report for the chief surgeon and suggest a course of treatment.

Communicative content will be determined by the transactions between the students and the French practitioner. There will be questions, requests for details, verification, requests for information about the language, etc, which will reflect the rules for the use of language between students and veterinary surgeons in the context of a language class, which means for example that the French veterinary surgeon will play the part of language expert. What the students learn will be determined by the interactions within each group, and it is obviously impossible to say in advance what functional content would be. There will obviously be common points, but what will actually be said will vary greatly from one group to another depending on whether they know much about the disease, whether they get on well with each other, whether they want to finish the job quickly, etc. All that can be said is that analysis of the transcript of their discussion will show that the three individuals need to negotiate between themselves (ie in linguistic and cognitive terms) in order to perform a task known to be of use to them and which implies:

1. interpretation of the content of the chart;
2. transformation of the information contained in the chart into an object of negotiation in order to make a joint diagnosis and agree on treatment;
3. "translation" of the result of this negotiation into a written text which obeys the conventional rules of written discourse between the student and the head of the clinic.

"Stimulus"

Clinical
analysis
chart

Text 1

Summary
representation
of the activity
described

Negotiated interpretation of the information contained in the chart resulting in a diagnosis, in turn becoming the object of negotiation resulting in a decision on treatment.

Discussion on the appropriate form for the report.

"Final response"

Written report

Text 2

b. Progression: the previous example shows plainly that the idea of progression is going to change. What determines it is both what the participants know about veterinary medicine and what they know in French. It will probably have been observed that the activity enables students to learn how to ask a colleague questions about language, but this will happen within the context of the activity. If one of the English students decides to make use of this to check his pronunciation of the names of diseases, for example, the others may refuse to help him since that is not necessary in carrying out the task at hand. In other words, each group will have its own way of accomplishing the task and its own action procedures, which will determine the content of the linguistic learning of each person.

c. This implies that in general the courses are organised on the basis of units of activities or tasks to be undertaken (rather than content units) and the sequential classification of objectives will depend on the psychological state of the learners rather than on the logic of the content.

For example, let us suppose that one of the groups was completely nonplussed by the case described by the chart; the students in that group would spend a lot of time clarifying and discussing it, while those in a group that know all about the case would spend their time discussing "how to write a good report", a totally different topic of conversation.

It may be mentioned in this context that it is impossible to establish a direct relationship between linguistic simplicity and complexity and communicative simplicity and complexity. It would even seem that these two dimensions stand in inverse proportion to one another (see Question 3).

Assessment: It is clear that with this approach the concept of assessment must change. It is a dynamic process which involves assessing the quality of our collective or individual tasks. Training in self-assessment or group assessment can give rise to activities which are themselves integral parts of the course (cf Lyons, Lisbon). With respect to professional relationships, it would obviously be desirable to have assessment tools enabling students to be awarded "credits" recognised in all the countries of Europe, but such tools would have to take account of the variations mentioned above, and for the time being it is obvious that this is no-one's major preoccupation: there are too many other problems to be dealt with first. One assesses as best one can but in a completely informal way, without raising the question of comparison between what, for example, English and Dutch engineers should be able to do in French. Although this contradicts the objectives of the Modern Languages Project, it seems a perfectly natural thing at the outset, since, despite one or two exploratory studies such as the one by O Régent cited earlier, most course teachers and designers have not gone beyond the problem of differences in professional practice between one country and another, ie the conventions governing the use of language and written and oral discourse among members of a socio-occupational category. We should note that most of problems raised by this type of teaching have not been dealt with by the project and that they cast doubt on the cheery optimism of J Trim, who wrote in 1973: "Within a European context, cultural integration has progressed so far that the cultural content to which any language user has to refer varies within very narrow limits. The concepts

necessary to communication may therefore be ordered and classified to some extent independently of the formal linguistic means by which they are expressed in particular languages". The problems of our students concern the rules for using such concepts, and we still know little about this (see Question 4).

In theory, all methods for organising learning objectives are possible. In practice, there is plainly a correlation between the "urgency" of needs and a truly communicative methodological approach (ie the scale of predictability and the scale of adequation (Richerich 1973), or, in order: Lyons, Lisbon 2, then Cambridge 2, of the courses under consideration. In my opinion, Tilburg offers the best solution when strict linguistic instruction based on grammatical progression is judged necessary. This instruction forms a separate component with its own logic and excellent justification, the rest of the course being functional. The various possibilities for organising objectives have been described extremely clearly by L Alexander, to whom the functional/structural, the notional/functional, and thematic schemes. Commercially available courses are nearly always of the functional/structural type, with a few happy exceptions based on types of activity in a specialist field. However, a course published in France is not always easy to use in a non-French-speaking country, chiefly because of specific contrasts between two languages, along with cultural differences.

It is obvious that we are in an intermediate period where emphasis is being put on methodology, and the transition from the description of objectives in terms of grammatical linguistic behaviour to appropriate discursal behaviour is not simple. But it would be wrong to think that there is a "Council of Europe method". The Modern Languages Project can do no more than offer guidelines.

Recommended reading

Alexander, L, "Some methodological implications of Waystage and Threshold Level", CCC, Strasbourg 1977.

Breen M P and Candlin, C, "The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching", Applied Linguistics, vol. 1, no. 2 (80), 89-112.

Courtyllon, J, "Que devient la notion de progression?", Le Français dans le monde, 153-1980.

Meijers, A, "La grammaire dans un cours de français fonctionnel", Bulletin Pédagogique des Langues Vivantes, 53, 33-44, 1978.

Moirand, S, "Analyse des textes écrits et apprentissage 'grammatical'", ELA, 25, 101-125, 1977.

Ulijn, J M, "Comment enseigner le français comme matière à option à des étudiants universitaires non-littéraires en Hollande", Le Français dans le monde, 132, 14-17, 1977.

Question 8: Do these changes not imply a new type of teacher training?

What all this means is that teacher training must change too, although it would be absurd to say that language teachers no longer need linguistic training (see Bucharest I), which is indeed their specific contribution to an institution. What the teachers need to change their methods and habits, as well as their ways of thinking about learning.

The best way to train teachers in the communicative approach to language teaching to students in vocational courses in their own country or preparing to study in a foreign language is to have them communicate among themselves in their own special field, and think about what is happening when they do so.

Recommended reading

Kahn, G, Lahmann, D, "La mise en oeuvre du Projet Langues Vivantes dans le Séminaire sur l'enseignement fonctionnel du français (1975-79)" in Krumm, H J, Compendium of teacher training programmes, CDCC, Strasbourg 1981 (CC-GP4 (81) 25 draft report of 17 August 1981, Council of Europe).

Porcher, L, "Monsieur Thibault et le bec bumsen", Etudes de Linguistique appliquée, 23, 1976.

Roe, P, "Fundamental principles of ESP methodology", Introduction, Recherches et Echanges, Paris, vol. 6, no. 7, June 1981, 2-10

PART II: NEEDS AND NEEDS

There must be no confusion between:

1. analysis of the language needs of the target group as a socio-occupational group,
2. analysis of the language needs of a particular target group within that same group (or potentially within that same group) in a local situation, and
3. analysis of the needs of members of this target group as learners (language, cognitive, psychological, cultural, etc).

Level 1: Analysis of the language needs of a socio-occupational group

Sample question: Is the learning of French useful for professionals in the technical and commercial sector in the Netherlands (Eindhoven/Tilburg)?

Appropriate identification method: Inquiries and surveys. This was done at Eindhoven and Lisbon 1. A number of inquiries of this type have been carried out, eg the "foreign languages in industry and commerce" survey made in York in 1974 by Emmans, Hawkins and Westeby, or that of Claessen et al (78) in the Netherlands. Where they exist, it is obviously necessary to consult them.

If they do not exist, great care must be taken. Inquiries and surveys of this kind are extremely difficult to carry out, take a long time, and are extremely expensive; it is absolutely impossible for an individual to undertake one alone. This means that if you think such an inquiry is necessary, you will need to interest organisations with the resources to undertake it: professional organisations, chambers of commerce, policy-making bodies (relevant ministries), etc.

Usefulness: The results of such inquiries are often limited since they provide only very general information. Moreover, that information is confined to the present use of a language by the group concerned and there is often a considerable time-lag between the survey and the end of your group's training. The fact that secretaries did not use French in 1970 does not mean that there is no point in teaching French to secretaries being trained in 1980!

The main value of these surveys is that they offer a serious point of reference to programme directors and course designers in relation to which they can situate their activity. The reshaping of the course at Eindhoven Technical University in the 1970s, from one based on technical content to a course centred around a confrontation of Dutch and French civilisations in political, economic, social and general scientific terms (see Ulijn, 1977), is an excellent example of such a step.

Level 2: Pre-training needs analysis for a specific target group in a local situation

Sample question: What are the language needs of textile workers in Covilha who are to go to France (Lisbon 2)? Or what are the language needs of students at Eindhoven Technical University given that many of them will have careers in the technical and commercial sector?

We usually begin at this level, that is, we usually ask the question in reference to the learning situation in which we and the learners are rather than to the language use situation in which they subsequently will be.

At this level it is essential to know exactly what we are talking about. Discourse about needs is extremely ambiguous (Pelfrêne 77). We must determine precisely who is expressing the needs being discussed: the director of the institute, the teachers, the students, the administration, yourselves, etc.

A memorandum of use in distinguishing between language needs and learning needs is Richterich's diagram (1973).

Appropriate methods of identification: Questionnaires and interviews. We can use an analysis grid here (Richterich, Chancerel 77), but it must be made as simple as possible. The best course is to make people talk as much as possible and complete the grid afterwards. It should be remembered that the people you are talking to will often not understand what you are talking about, or will not see why you want to know so much and will give you the first answer that comes into their heads.

At this stage, you will usually have a very good idea of the institutional constraints, but no idea of the learning needs of the students who in most cases are not yet there, and a very idealised picture of language needs: a teacher's imagined picture.

An extremely useful tool at this stage is a socio-linguistic survey. An example of this is the work done at Lancaster by Candlin and others on communication between doctors and their patients (Candlin 74). Surveys of this kind can provide information on the composition of the socio-professional group (its sub-groups) and on how these groups communicate with each other, eg in terms of hierarchical relationships. Having examples of the way in which communication networks influence the rules of language use is obviously extremely valuable. It should not be forgotten that an interaction is structured by the roles played by the participants in it (Gremmo et al 1977). When the students leave for their course abroad, surveys of this kind, even informal ones, must be carried out on the spot. In some cases it will be useful to make contrastive studies. For example, transactions regarding fees do not occur in conversations between patients and doctors in England. Such studies will obviously have a considerable influence on the specifying of learning objectives since they increase the degree of predictability of language needs.

Usefulness: Defining the main bias of a course;
Specifying learning objectives.

The mistake which should not be made, even if the language-use situations are largely predictable, is to think that once you have filled in your grid and drawn up lists of objectives you have an analysis of learning needs. All you have is a list of necessary or desirable behaviours which enables you to form a picture of the target competence and to determine in part the target repertoire which would enable the students to behave in an appropriate fashion in a certain number of situations.

Level 3: Analysis of learning needs on contact with learners and during their training

Sample question: What do the Lyons trainees need in order to acquire the target competence? What do they know already? Is it necessary, for example, for them to undergo an intensive academic "catching-up" programme before starting their new training?

Or (Lisbon 1): In a preparatory distance-studies course, the target competence is necessarily fairly vaguely defined; how are we to choose teaching activities and materials which are meaningful for students (ie which meet their needs)? In such a case the only guide we have is the terminal behaviour to be achieved.

Appropriate method of identification: Observation of students, interview to prepare for self-assessment (Lisbon 1), preparation for learning autonomy (Lisbon 2), opting for a communicative method. "Linguistic aid" programme of the Lyons 4 type.

Usefulness: To help make learning easier by listening to students and by constant negotiation with them in relation to events in class

In teaching French to students undergoing specialist training, and even more to adults who already have some professional experience, this level is particularly important since it pinpoints the problem arising from the fact that account must be taken of what the learners already know as professional people. It is not only a matter of exploiting such knowledge, but of taking it into account since it exists, although it is not always what one expects (Lyons 1).

It is also at this level that we shall be able to choose appropriate teaching materials. For example (Lisbon 1), the content of some television programmes was changed because of negative feedback from students: if such flexibility is possible in distance studies, it should certainly be possible for a teacher in class.

Examples of mistakes due to faulty use or complete absence of language needs analysis:

1. Pre-reorientation in Eindhoven: large-scale inquiry showing the usefulness of French in the technical and commercial sector but inappropriate choice of teaching materials. The real language needs cover much wider semantic areas than the strictly "technical/commercial" field.
2. At Cambridge University some years ago a foundation sent out a questionnaire on the language needs of scientists, which led to the creation of a reading course for beginners, attended initially by more than 100 researchers and students from some 20 different departments - but not for long (analysis level 3).
3. Lisbon 3 (Cambridge has a similar course in anthropology): typical case of a course for specialists at university level where the departments concerned had not thought about the place of French in their training (level 2) and the target competence is almost meaningless for the students (analysis level 3).

PART 3: DESCRIPTION OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The description of learning objectives, to be of use, will depend on needs analysis (Richterich, 1973). There is necessarily a great difference between the learning objectives corresponding to the language needs of "idealised" learners who are "members of a socio-occupational category or potential members of that category"; those selected because of institutional constraints, ie the "requirements" of the institution; and those selected on the basis of the internal constraints of learners (their learning requirements), their linguistic ability, their knowledge of the basic concepts underlying their field and their ability to manipulate such concepts.

The three levels of needs analysis therefore correspond to three levels in the description of objectives.

Level 1: "Ideal" learning objectives

At this level we will have a good idea of the relative relevance of the various areas of relationships, the importance of spoken and written language and the most frequent situational contexts, and significant speech acts and fields of reference.

Useful formulations at this level will be expressed in terms of desirable ideal behaviour. For example: if it is true that a large number of sales agreements are handled by telephone, an engineer in the sales department will have to be capable of dealing with such transactions with clients by telephone.

In practice, no-one bothers to specify in greater detail the linguistic content needed for the appropriate performance of all foreseeable acts in all fields at this level. Even the authors of commercial courses work on the basis of the image of some institution and ask themselves what can reasonably be taught in one or two years, ie they are already at level 2.

Level 2: Learning objectives selected in relation to institutional constraints

Objectives will be selected not only in relation to the time allotted to languages and the funds available, but also (see above, Question 6) in relation to the conventions governing transactions in the field of professional relationships. For example, if there is not much time in which to prepare students for carrying out commercial transactions, we may select face-to-face sales transactions because they are more frequent than transactions by telephone, and written transactions because these always end with written confirmation. Thus we can move from desirable objectives to necessary objectives in a logical progression. Account will also be taken of students' foreseeable learning needs. For example, we may provide a much richer context for professionals in refresher training than for students who as yet have no experience of the profession. An experienced professional will have developed methods for interpreting a letter asking for prices, say, taking into account the size of the firm writing, the size of the possible order, the type of client, etc, which will enable him to evaluate the content of such a letter regardless of the language, much more rapidly than a student still in training.

At this level, urgency plays an important role in the definition of necessary objectives. This is the same problem we mentioned with reference to the Cambridge veterinary medicine students. When we realised that because of shortage of time our students were going to have to cope with situations for which they would not have the competence required to manipulate an appropriate target-repertoire, we decided that we would have to teach them how to compensate for their deficiencies, which led to a whole range of learning objectives geared to compensation.

Use of Un Niveau-Seuil

Theoretically a list of acts, objects and notions could be drawn up on the basis of Un Niveau-Seuil. Our knowledge about the practices of a particular profession might, for example, lead us to omit "Et si on faisait

un contrat de vente?" as an appropriate offer. But in reality it is obvious that no-one works in this way. Un Niveau-Seuil is used as a frame of reference; we select authentic documents which we want to use during the course and use them as a source of possible appropriate performancy in the discorsal context in which they were found. It is only afterwards that we check whether a particular form is included in Un Niveau-Seuil. That is why none of the courses analysed used lists of acts, notions or reference objects, and this is very reassuring.

Examples of poor selection criteria: confined to a single area of relationships (eg professional), a single field of reference (eg technical), or a single type of written discourse ("scientific texts"). Use of such criteria often shows up a lack of reflection at the first level of needs analysis, or poor negotiations with the user institution. Thinking of undergraduates as if they were all going to become researchers, in particular, often has disappointing results.

Level 3: Actual learning objectives: sub-objectives

These are objectives which the students discover and set for themselves during their learning. Many sub-objectives will call for the development of micro-skills. Some of these sub-objectives can be foreseen, but the varying resources will feel different learning needs and will consequently set themselves different objectives.

For example (Cambridge 2), the veterinary students will all find themselves in situations in which they need to write down the names of symptoms and diseases. It is therefore extremely useful for them to be able to work out the written form of technical words in veterinary medicine from their spoken form. To give them practice in this, we proposed speed tests with dictations of words used in the laboratory, the first tape with one voice and standard pronunciation, the second with different voices, the third with different quality variations, the fourth with different accents, etc, ie we tried to develop their ability to adapt to different voices, phonological variations, problems of transmission, etc. When the students had to transcribe spoken forms as part of their communicative activities, their ability varied considerably, and this affected the activity itself. For example, one student wanted to abandon the activity and return to dictation, while another preferred to develop his ability to compensate by asking for repetition (recycling input) or asking for things to be spelt (breaking down into smaller units).

The analysis of the courses which we have considered shows without a doubt that the more complex the linguistic learning objectives are, the greater are the learning needs and the more they predominate. The Lyons team occasionally emphasised the constant revision of needs and objectives at this level of intermediate objectives.

CONCLUSIONS: EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY

The difficulty for teachers is to not lose sight of the necessary objectives and to remain extremely flexible. The temptations facing them are many and have been most entertainingly described by P Roe (1981); the greatest, perhaps is, getting bogged down in "a priori" needs analyses. Case studies show great eclecticism at the methodological level. In all cases, the objective set is the acquisition of a communicative competence, but there is no hesitation in introducing learning sub-objectives based on linguistic progression if this seems necessary. The important thing is not to lose sight of the significance of the choices made at this level within the general framework of the course.

As has been said before, it is impossible to provide directives in the field of methodology. Methods aimed at making students responsible for their own learning, ie preparing them for autonomy and self-management of their studies, seems despite everything to be the best way of responding to their real learning needs (Lisbon 2, Lyons 1, 2, 3 and 4). With these methods, students are given the means of developing the methodological tools appropriate to them as they learn, and thus they correspond to the third level of analysis mentioned above. We have tried to show what is meant by a communicative method in the replies to questions 6, 7 and 8 and, keeping to this method, we should like to ask readers to try it out and exchange their experiences with us. It should be emphasised that these courses represent only a tiny fraction of the possible courses and a very small number of specialisations. It is to be hoped that experiments will be tried, or reported, in other areas. Anyone interested in joint work or exchanges of experience should contact the Council of Europe and/or AUPELF.

Recommended reading

AUPELF, "Séminaire sur la mise à niveau des boursiers scientifiques" (Toulouse, 14-17 December 1981): consolidated report (to be published).

Holec, H, "Autonomy and foreign language learning", Council of Europe, Strasbourg 1979.

Holec, H (dir), "Autonomie dans l'apprentissage et apprentissage de l'autonomie", Etudes de linguistique appliquée, 41, 1981.

The group involved in this work has made a number of recommendations in regard to fields in which research and applications would seem most acutely needed:

1. It would be useful to have contrastive studies on the written and oral discourse of particular socio-occupational groups (cf O Régent 81). One hypothesis that needs testing is that - within a single field of reference, for example - professional praxis imposes uses of the same concepts which differ widely from one country to another.

2. Explorations of learning assessment would also be desirable. This does not mean certification; the institution of a "European diploma" is not a matter for the teaching profession. External evaluation, on the other

hand, concerns institutions and teachers, while internal evaluation (see question 7) forms an integral part of learning because it helps to create the process (Holec 79).

There are also questions affecting external evaluation:

- How is students' success to be measured?
- Can a test of linguistic competence be replaced by a test of communicative competence?
- Would it be useful to design evaluation materials which could be used by different countries? In view of the diversity of local experiments, this would certainly not seem desirable.

As regards internal evaluation (Oskarsson 77), there is a very big problem of training for both teachers and students, involving the concept of self-assessment and methods suitable for the target groups with which we are dealing.

A working party might tackle these problems.

3. Grammatical teaching materials are needed which are suited to the particular objectives and situations with which we are concerned. Work on this has already been begun by adult education institutes (Volkshochschulen) in Germany, in relation to the grammar of Un Niveau-Seuil (Courtillon, J 80). Such experiments should be more widely publicised and other efforts encouraged.

4. The basic principles of the CDCC project will plainly remain unapplied in the teaching of language for special purposes as long as the teachers themselves do not have access to training enabling them to come to grips with the particular methodological problems of this form of teaching. Priority must be given to such training.

Recommended reading

Courtillon, J, "Pratiques de communication et formes linguistiques", Pädagogische Arbeitsstelle, Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, 1980.

Oskarsson, M, "Approaches to self-assessment in foreign language learning", Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1977 (also published by Pergamon Press).

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A P P E N D I X 1DESCRIPTION OF THE CDCC MODERN LANGUAGES PROJECT

Founded on 5 May 1949 with ten member states, the Council of Europe now has 21. Its goal is "to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideas and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress". Work towards this goal takes the form of joint investigation of questions of common interest, the conclusion of agreements and co-operation in the economic, social, cultural, scientific, legal and administrative fields.

The Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) was instituted on 1 January 1962 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to prepare cultural policy proposals for the Council of Europe, co-ordinate and carry out the whole of its cultural programme and allocate the resources of the Cultural Fund. All the member governments of the Council of Europe, together with the Holy See and Finland which have also signed the European Cultural Convention, are represented on the Council for Cultural Co-operation.

The fundamental aim of the research and development programme undertaken by the group of experts called together in 1971 by the Committee for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development of the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe has been to create the conditions for the establishment of a suitable structural framework for the development, through international co-operation, of a coherent and progressive European policy in the field of adult language learning.

A European language policy of this kind should be designed so as to serve the basic ideals of the CDCC, such as:

- a. to facilitate the free movement of people and ideas in Europe by providing the linguistic means of direct inter-personal communication;
- b. to make the process of language learning more democratic by providing the conceptual tools for the planning, construction and conduct of courses closely geared to the needs, motivations and characteristics of the learner, and enabling him so far as possible to steer and control his own progress;
- c. to provide a framework for close and effective international co-operation in the organisation of language learning, by placing at the disposal of adults a learner-centred, motivation-based language learning system designed to meet their diverse social and vocational needs.

From the beginning it was envisaged that this system might take the form of a "unit/credit scheme" ("système d'unités capitalisables")/ Accordingly, one essential aim of the work of the group has been to examine the desirability and feasibility of developing a European unit/credit scheme for modern language learning by adults and, given that it is desirable and feasible, to formulate proposals for its introduction and implementation. In order to establish the desirability and feasibility of such a scheme, it is necessary to provide answers to a series of questions, such as:

1. Can and should the global content of language learning be broken down into limited units, capable of being arranged in different ways to suit the needs of different groups of learners?
2. Can learning objectives be specified in a sufficiently explicit way for the content of learning programmes to be assessed in unit/credit equivalences?
3. Can learning systems be developed leading to the attainment of these objectives?
4. Can the attainment of the objectives specified be reliably ascertained?
- 5.1 Does appropriate organisational and administrative machinery exist for the implementation of a unit/credit scheme?
- 5.2 If so, are the institutions concerned prepared to participate in the scheme?
- 5.3 If not, can the necessary machinery be established and made operational?
- 5.4 In that case, are member governments prepared to devote the necessary resources to its establishment?
- 5.5 If it were established, how would it relate to existing institutions in the field of adult language teaching and testing?

Of these questions, the most important, upon which all the rest depend, is undoubtedly the first, which has accordingly to be considered at some length.

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APPENDIX 2CASE STUDIES

The group discussed and sought to extract the essentials from the following case studies:

1. ENTPE, Lyons (Ecole Nationale des Travaux Publics de l'Etat)
 - French for qualified engineers in civil engineering, transport, town planning or related fields of specialisation, in France for further study in a field of specialisation more restricted than that of their first degree (English-speaking persons from Africa and Asia);
 - French for professional persons from Indonesia residing in France;
 - French for Mexican and Brazilian specialists in civil engineering, mining, geology etc, in France for further study;
 - Linguistic assistance programme for foreign students having completed their preliminary residence course and already working in their field of special study.
2. Catholic University of Tilburg
 - French course for students of international economics;
 - Course in reading scientific texts for students in various departments;
 - Course to be designed in co-operation with the Eindhoven Technical University, for engineering and company management students who are learning French and interested in the technical and commercial sector.
3. Eindhoven Technical University
 - French for engineering students in various fields;
 - Eindhoven/Tilburg project for the technical and commercial sector (see 2 above).
4. Portuguese Distance Studies Institute in Lisbon
 - French 1 programme for young people and young adults (preparatory year for university entrance): common core and introduction to languages of specialisation (economics, law, physics, chemistry, medicine, engineering etc);
 - Design and correcting of French tests for admission to university or certain professions (banking, translation, interpretation);

- French for textile personnel having to conduct business in Lyons, and occupational updating.
- 5. New University, Lisbon
 - French for students in the exact sciences and technology, medicine, veterinary medicine, social sciences, engineering, economic sciences etc, the objective being the ability to consult French bibliographies;
 - Social communication course in French.
- 6. Cambridge University
 - Germany for student veterinary surgeons going to the Federal Republic of Germany for a period of residence;
 - German for engineering students.
- 7. University of Bucharest
 - French for students of mathematics, physics, geology, geography, biology, history, philosophy and law;
 - Course in language for special purposes for future teachers of French who will be working in specialist secondary schools or higher education establishments;
 - Refresher course for teachers of French (as a language for special purposes) in specialist secondary schools.
- 8. Copenhagen Advanced School of Business
(Handelshøjskolen i København)
 - Course leading to the diploma of bilingual or trilingual secretary (undergraduate);
 - Course leading to the diploma in translation (commercial) (second level);
 - Course leading to the diploma in translation/interpretation (third level);
- 9. University of Duisburg
 - Course not yet running; it will train students who will be teaching French as a "language for special purposes" in technical subjects.

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A P P E N D I X 3

PARTICIPANTS AT MEETINGS HELD TO PREPARE THIS REPORT

COPENHAGEN ADVANCED SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Mr Jacques QVISTGAARD
Handelshøjskolen (HEC)
7. Fabrikvej
DK - 2000 KØBENHAVN F

ENTPE, LYONS

Mr PRUNIER, Directeur

Mrs Rolande ASSE, in charge of language teaching

Mr PRUVOST, Director of Studies

Mrs C PARPETTE

Mrs O MINARY

Ecole Nationale des Travaux Publics de l'Etat
Rue Maurice-Audin
F-69120 VAUKX-EN-VELIN

UNIVERSITY OF DUISBURG

Prof. Dr. Bernd SPILLNER
Fachbereich 3 (Romanistik)
Universität Duisburg
Postfach 10 16 29
D-4100 DUISBURG

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF TILBURG

Mr A J A MEIJERS
Katholieke Hoogeschool te Tilburg
P.B. 90 153
NL-5000 LE - TILBURG/ Netherlands

EINDHOVEN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Dr. J M ULIJN
Technische Hoogeschool te Eindhoven
Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences
Postbus 513
Den Dolech 2
NL-5600 MB EINDHOVEN/Netherlands

PORTUGUESE DISTANCE STUDIES INSTITUTE

Mrs Maria Emilia RICARDO MARQUES
Instituto Português de Ensino a Distância
Av. Elias Garcia, 137-2º
P-1093 LISBOA CODEX/Portugal

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Mrs Edith M HARDING-ESCH
(replaced at the first meeting by Mrs B Sedley)
University of Cambridge
Department of Linguistics
Sidgwick Avenue
GB-CAMBRIDGE CB3 9DA

MEMBERS OF THE CDCC MODERN LANGUAGES PROJECT GROUP

Mr René RICHTERICH
Directeur
Universität Bern
Institut für Sprachwissenschaft
Abteilung für Angewandte Linguistik
Hallerstrasse 12
CH-3012 BERN/ Switzerland

Mr Louis PORCHER
Directeur du Laboratoire de Sciences Sociales
Chargé de mission aux relations internationales
Ecole Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud
2, Avenue du Palais
F-92211 SAINT-CLOUD/France

AUPELF

Mr Michel TETU, Secrétaire Général Adjoint
Mr Jack BATHO
Mr André LADOUSSE
AUPELF
173, Boulevard Saint-Germain
F-75272 PARIS CEDEX 06

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Mr Herbert JOCHER
Head of the Out-of-School Education Division

Miss Antonietta da VIGILI
Responsible for the Modern Languages Project in the
Out-of-School Education Division

Mr Michael VORBECK
Head of the Educational Research and Documentation Section

Council of Europe
B.P. 431 R 6
F-67006 STRASBOURG-CEDEX/France